

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 29, 2017

The Honorable Heather Wilson
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Dear Secretary Wilson:

We write to express our concern regarding the Administration's Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18) budget request to divest two C-21A aircraft from the 200th Airlift Squadron (200th AS) and associated manpower from the Colorado Air National Guard. The 200th AS provides secure priority airlifts for high-level military and civilian leaders throughout the world, supports sensitive cargo missions, and flies high-speed airborne target missions for North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD).

As you know, Peterson AFB is the second busiest Distinguished Visitor (DV) terminal in the Department of Defense. In 2016, U.S. Transportation Command recognized the 200th AS as the #1 airlift unit for the 7th year in a row. In the same year, this squadron had the best C-21 maintenance operation in the Air Force (only one late departure for maintenance issues in the 200th AS, compared to eighty-seven in the Active C-21 fleet).

We request that the Air Force provide a detailed rationale for this proposal, including:

1. Whether any consideration was given to the Total Force impact, especially given the Air Force's current pilot shortage crisis. According to Air Force leadership, there is currently a shortage of nearly 1,600 pilots, including more than 300 mobility pilots like the ones at the 200th AS. Furthermore, this shortage is expected to worsen over time. Losing these 20 highly experienced pilots will contribute to this shortage. Additionally, we are concerned that cutting the only remaining Guard C-21 squadron sends the wrong message regarding Guard integration into the Total Force, as recommended by the National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force. The use of Guard and Reserve pilots will be important in light of the challenge of Active Component pilot retention, and we are concerned this cut could negatively affect morale, retention, and recruiting. Pilots leaving active service should be encouraged to continue to contribute to the Air Force mission in the Guard and Reserve.

2. How Air Mobility Command plans to backfill the lost airlift and target missions with fewer aircraft and pilots. Our understanding is that the number of missions that must be flown is not decreasing, yet this plan could cut the C-21 fleet. Given this need, we request information regarding the plan to continue to provide high-speed airborne targeting for NORAD.

3. Whether there is any net savings in budget or manpower. According to the Air Force's FY18 budget documentation, divestiture of two C-21s will save approximately \$482,000 and five Full-Time Equivalent positions at Peterson AFB. We request information on how the lost sensitive cargo mission

will be replaced, and an analysis on the cost. We also request information on whether the Air Force plans to shift additional resources into the Active Component for increased flight hours, pilots (to include training cost), and the additional operating cost to support West Coast missions from Midwest or East Coast locations. We are concerned about the loss in capital investment, as pilots cost approximately \$10 million each to train.

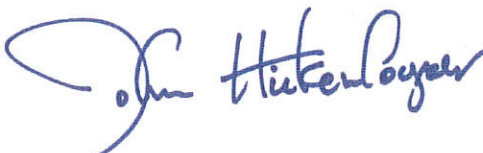
4. Why there has not been any congressional notification of this basing decision from the Air Force or National Guard. We request an explanation regarding why the strategic basing process was not followed for this action, per Air Force Instruction 10-503. As of the date of this letter, there has not yet been any official, strategic-level communication or justification provided for this basing decision, which has a significant effect on the state of Colorado. We request that future communication involve the congressional delegation, the Governor, and the Adjutant General.

We look forward to working with you to preserve this important mission.

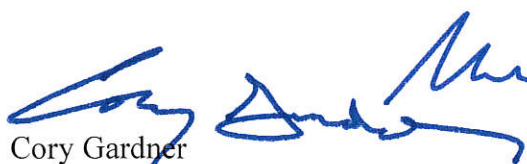
Sincerely,



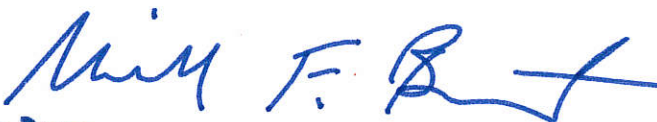
Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress



John Hickenlooper
Governor of Colorado



Cory Gardner
United States Senator



Michael Bennet
United States Senator



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



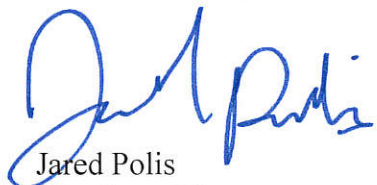
Mike Coffman
Member of Congress



Scott Tipton
Member of Congress



Ed Perlmutter
Member of Congress



Jared Polis
Member of Congress

Cc:

General David L. Goldfein
Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force

General Joseph L. Lengyel
Chief, National Guard Bureau

Lieutenant General L. Scott Rice
Director, Air National Guard